

THE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

Andrea, whom she was tending while dying slowly of cancer, accused her to the prioress and sisters of the Mantellate as guilty of unchastity. In spite of Lapa's vehement indignation, Catherine nursed her traducer lovingly to the end, and at last gained her soul, too, for her Divine Bridegroom. In the first pang of the lying accusation, she had prayed to Him with tears to prove her innocence; but when, in answer, He bade her choose between the crown of pearls and the crown of thorns, she eagerly and ardently pressed the latter upon her brows. It was on this occasion that, to punish herself for a momentary fit of aversion caused by the horrible physical state of the patient's body, Catherine subjected herself to an ordeal too dreadful to be set down in this place.

" Sweetest daughter," said the Divine Voice in her heart, on another occasion, " the time to come of thy earthly pilgrimage will be full of such wondrous new gifts from Me that it will cause stupor and incredulity in the hearts of the ignorant and carnal; and many, too, that love thee will doubt, and will think that what will befall thee through My exceeding love is delusion. For I will pour such abundance of grace into thy soul that it will overflow wondrously even in thy body, which will thereby acquire an all unwonted mode of life. Thy heart will be so mightily inflamed towards the salvation of thy neighbours that, forgetting thine own sex, thou wilt utterly change thy former way of conversation, nor wilt thou any more shun the company of men and women; nay, for the salvation of their souls, thou wilt expose thyself to every labour according to thy power. At these things many will be scandalized, and by them shalt thou be spoken against that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. But be not thou disturbed, nor fear at all; for I shall be ever with thee, and shall deliver thy soul from deceitful tongues and from the mouth of those that lie. So execute manfully whatever the Holy Spirit instructs thee, because through thee I will deliver many souls from the jaws of Hell, and, by means of My grace, bring them to the Kingdom of Heaven."¹ *LegenJa*, II. v. I (§ 165).